

Thalassa

No women on board, and no church minister
in sight of the ship before she puts to sea.
Wee Bobby redds the nets: a dog yaps
on the harbour wall, wanting to follow its master
into the flapping waves. And the icicles on the chains,
the kirk bell clanging out its doom on us,
our faces beaten raw by wind and salt –
all this readies us for time away, with nothing
to save us except fish and the sea.
The sky's grey thins: soon the women
will twitch nervous curtains, hoping
the harbour is empty so they can work. Then the bells stop,
the village stretches slowly into life. My skipper
shouts CAST at me; I nod and grab the rope,
wishing I could get better at letting it go.